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To:

~~First Class~~

RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

25¢

VOL. 3 NO. 8
SECOND ISSUE OF
APRIL 1973
#58

Express Ads

SURF SPECIAL RUNS AGAIN. 360 miles of travel on Espee's Coast Line by special train will be featured when Pacific Railroad Society operates their fourth annual excursion to Surf from Los Angeles, on May 19, and also May 20th. Special train will have 18 cars each day including coaches, snack car, diner, lounge and private pullman cars. Leaves LAUPT 7:30 am each day, returning at 8:30 pm. Fare $22.75 coach; $32.75 first class. Brochure and reservations are available from Pacific Railroad Society, Box 633, Costa Mesa, CA 92627.

YOUR AMTRAK TICKETS BY MAIL! A call is all it takes for complete planning, reservations and tickets. Call GREAT WESTERN TOURS at (415) 398-2994, or write us at the Sheraton Palace Hotel, 639 Market St., San Francisco 94105. "An AMTRAK appointed agency dedicated to the pleasure of travel by train."

CLEAR PLASTIC SLIP COVERS SPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR PUBLIC TIMETABLES 5¢ EACH. FREE SAMPLE. LARGE PUBLIC TIMETABLE CATALOG 50¢. Tom Coval, 21 East Robin Road, Holland, PA 18966.

WANTED: Gulf, Mobile & Ohio; Alton; Mobile and Ohio; and Gulf, Mobile and Northern public timetables. Jack Ferry, 10041 S. Prairie Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60628.

GREAT passenger train ads from a bygone era! Original item--back issues of the National Geographic magazine, late '40s thru early '50s. WHOLE issue shipped to you. Details, send SASE to Paul Halbach, P.O. Box 26313, Los Angeles CA 90026.

Unusual railroadiana item: having personally observed the conversion of UPRR "E" unit #913 to Amtrak #418, I managed to salvage intact the capital "I" decals from the words Union Pacific. $1.25 each postpaid. Write P. Halbach at address above.

MENU COLLECTORS! Did you know that Amtrak issued special Christmas holiday-only menus during the recent Christmas season, at least on the SUPERCHIEF/EL CAPITAN? A few of these now available from Paul Halbach (address above) @40¢ ea., postpd.

ADVERTISING RATES FOR RAIL TRAVEL NEWSLETTER: Express ads (80 characters and spaces per line)--up to three lines for $1.00 (minimum); additional lines 35¢ each, 3 for $1.00. Count typewriter spaces to gauge line length and send your ad copy with remittance to Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. You'll be surprised how soon your ad gets out and how fast the responses come in. (Display ads: full page $10 (5x8 inches), half page $6, quarter page $3.50 for camera-ready copy. Need help preparing your ad? Write for details.)

Two Years of Amtrak

ON THE COVER: For our Second Anniversary of Amtrak edition we chose a photograph of what was evidently the first Amtrak-painted diesel to run in the West. Amtrak engine no. 103 waits at Missoula, Montana, with the westbound NORTH COAST HIAWATHA on June 20, 1972. At least one other Amtrak diesel, no. 102, also saw service about that time on the Minneapolis-Spokane train. Photo by Gilbert Hulin, Northwest Rail Images.

LETTERS

I just read the First April RTN, and can fill in Pete Bretz on the location of the Orrington Hotel. It's Evanston, Illinois's most famous hostelry, and it's within walking distance of both the Northwestern University campus and the C&NW station. Sadly, intercity passenger service thru Evanston ceased on Amtrak day. How the Orrington's napkins got on the SUPER CHIEF, tho, is a mystery.

Mike Blaszak

Park Ridge, Illinois

Your publication is excellent and deserving of high praise for its high quality of good journalism. Thank you especially for your "Canada News Letter" and for Amtrak news. These keep me informed of latest developments between trips.

Did you know that the Minnesota Legislature is also studying the rail passenger problem in that state and a bill has been introduced to expand rail passenger service in Minnesota? The most probable routes mentioned are Twin Cities-Duluth and Twin Cities-Winnipeg; however, there is a possibility of some services in Southern Minnesota being restored.

Thank you again for your fine publication. I always look forward to its arrival and it takes high priority on my reading list. Keep up the good work.

Stephen E. Morse

Ottumwa, Iowa

Monday, April 9, saw several inches of snow fall on parts of the Midwest. I read with interest in the Milwaukee newspapers of the effect the snow had on transportation there. The airport was closed and Greyhound cancelled all its departures. These services were not resumed until sometime on Tuesday. Meanwhile, Amtrak reported its trains on or close to schedule on Tuesday and that they had stayed within 20 minutes of schedule on Monday! That says it all.

Rick Goebel

Racine, Wisconsin

Much of the enjoyment of reading RTN is in comparing personal trips and experiences with those in your magazine. Most of our experiences are pleasant, sometimes in the face of overwhelming odds due to the troubled state of some railroads.

I read in the First April RTN of the railroads' (SP and BN in this case) botched attempt to get the COAST STARLIGHT thru, then running out of fuel. I'm sure that was quite exasperating to the passengers, as a similar incident happened on the GEORGE WASHINGTON at Cincinnati on March 31.

We had traveled from Portland, Oregon via the COAST STARLIGHT, SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR, and now on the GEORGE WASHINGTON we were 1½ hours late into Cincinnati, due to Penn Central slow orders. I was determined (my wife gave up and went to bed) to remain awake in the dome to see the skyline of Cincinnati from the Ohio River Bridge as we departed the new Amtrak station. However, after several minutes of waiting and

(continued on page 3)

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Projected mailing date for this issue: May 3, 1973.

LETTERS (Continued)

no sound of a "'board," I stepped off, investigated the delay, and found out our little GP-7 road switcher (our sole power from Chicago to Cincinnati) had run low on fuel. Half an hour later, a local fuel dealer arrived and began pumping fuel into the engine, a process which consumed about 45 minutes. (There are no fueling facilities at the new Amtrak station.) So I saw the skyline of Cincinnati between 2 and 3 a.m., and we arrived home in Alexandria, VA about 4 hours late.

In always looking for the positive, we found it in this case; by seeing more of the springtime Virginia mountains from the dome in daylight.

Adron F. Hall

Alexandria, Virginia

Your recent comments (last issue) regarding equipment rules for the COAST STARLIGHT/DAYLIGHT are interesting. Observation of train #11 departing Seattle generally confirms that all cars carry the Amtrak motif or are of unpainted stainless steel; however, exceptions do occur. A case in point is the departure on April 14. The 17-car consist included 7 coaches and 5 sleepers. One of the sleepers was BN 1260, a spic and span Kelly green car with white striping. Behind it, another sleeper, NP 364, painted in the traditional NORTH COAST LIMITED two-tone green, albeit with many chips of paint missing to demonstrate its mileage. In addition to the silver grey ex-Burlington Route E8's on the point, BN 9740 in the ex-GN "big sky blue" paint scheme ran cab facing the baggage car.

Amtrak may be turning away fares on the intra-California 4-days-a-week run for lack of space, but this consist had seats and berths accommodating 475.

Paul Kassen

Seattle, Washington

The testimony of Rep. Julia Butler Hansen, head of an Interior Dept. budget appropriations subcommittee, to the House transportation appropriations subcommittee in which he urged Amtrak to work closely with the National Park Service to promote greater use of trains to parks and less reliance on autos (see last issue) is most interesting.

In view of the fact that both the proposed service from St. Louis to Laredo via Arkansas and the San Joaquin Valley train come within a very few miles of very popular National Parks (Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas and Yosemite National Park) is even more reason that the funds for these trains should be released by OMB. The popular sleeping car service between Chicago, St. Louis, Little Rock and Hot Springs only a few years ago was very popular and during the Oaklawn Racing Season usually ran 2 or 3 cars. Hot Springs National Park with its very famous Hot Mineral Water Baths are world-known. Also, remember the big green bottles of "Mountain Valley Mineral Water" that graced the tables of many dining cars a few years ago--this was also a product of Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas.

John A. Mills

Little Rock, Arkansas

I always enjoy reading your type of publication--frequently there are nuggets of information that are both interesting and useful.

However, why be (or appear to be) so cussed ornery all the time re the actions of the SP? Referring to the Dallas story (last issue), has it ever occurred to you what kind of damage to the balance sheet can be inflicted by passenger trains? SP may appear to be somewhat hardboiled to deal with but basically they field extremely competent management teams who know their business and know what should be done.

Not so long ago, I worked on a cost of freight train interference study which, on a relatively lightly used (by freight) double-track operation, ran into almost a million dollars a year, i.e., negative impact of passenger operations.

Today's ownership costs of freight equipment--lease, per diem, et alia, have pyramided so high that it borders on catastrophe if you cannot keep your freight operation in constant motion. It is beginning to be almost unthinkable that a

freight train should be delayed even for a few minutes by a passenger train--or for that matter, that a passenger train should interfere with switching or way freight-type movements.

In 1972, 32.5% of Penn Central's revenues were chewed up by equipment costs--the maintenance portion was about a third of this cost item. You can bet that this ruinous level of expense was incurred in no small part because of the constant delaying of freight movements to allow passenger trains thru. One of the most ridiculous sights on earth is to see a pair of hundred-plus car freight trains sitting waiting for one-car Silverliner PC shuttles--and waiting sometimes for an hour or more because of resultant crossover blockages.

Being a rail fan no doubt is a lot of fun, but for heaven's sakes try to cast at least part of the fan aspect into a mold that makes a far more determined attempt to truly understand the business--all aspects of it.

Carl R. Englund, Jr.

Ossipee, New Hampshire

(Railfans commonly speak as if freight trains were their worst enemy, holding up and otherwise interfering with passenger movements, but we'd wager that most passenger train lovers would admit that freight trains are the next best vehicles around. Imagine the chaos and the ruinous expense to the citizen if freight trains were abolished and freight movements had to be shifted to highways and air! The big problem at the base of the seeming freight-passenger conflict is the unbalanced transportation system inflicted upon us by short-sighted government actions. One of the biggest helps in gaining balance would be the creation of an interstate railroad system, such as is now up before Congress, that would shift the burden of costly track upkeep away from already financially pressed railroads and at the same time insure that citizens could travel the way the Lord intended--on safe, smooth rails. The freight-passenger conflict exists in every mode of transport, not just rails. People must move around, and so must freight. The question is how to balance things out within and between modes so both pigs and people can move swiftly, comfortably, and safely, and with the least environmental disruption. --Ed.)

Please correct statements attributable to me and to Congressman Alan Steelman regarding the schedule requested of the SP between Dallas and Houston on the proposed route (see last issue). These misquotes were due to a Dallas Morning News article that was later corrected.

He and I have both advocated a running time between Dallas and Houston of 4 hours 50 minutes as has the entire committee. We have timing records made within the last few days or weeks of cumulative freight time over this route, not counting switching at division and sub-division points, which would not be applicable to passenger trains anyway, of 5 hours 50 minutes. Consequently we feel that if the accepted 20 mph differential recognized by the FRA track standards is observed, the 4 hours 50 minutes is entirely within reason and is still 25 minutes longer than the 4 hours 25 minutes which was in effect 30 years ago and which ran with a 98% on time average.

This week I went with cameramen and a reporter on a trip down SP's fast Corsicana-Hearne line and we made a brief documentary of the daily mile-a-minute dash of the "Blue Streak Merchandise" complete with documented departure and arrival times covering the 89.5 miles in 1 hour 31 minutes with the second section right behind it in 1 hour 30 minutes. The SP had asked 1 hour 50 minutes for the passenger train over this segment. The film was aired on the "Newsroom" program and SP has been getting the horselaugh ever since. A road foreman was even running the engine. High speed running scenes and commentary were made from the automobile along the route.

M. D. Monaghan, Member & Technical Advisor
Dallas City-County Amtrak Committee

Garland, Texas

CANADA NEWS LETTER

THERE'S A POSSIBILITY, say some Ottawa officials, that the new LRC (lightweight, rapid, comfortable) passenger train equipment may be tested on the Edmonton-Calgary run of CP. This would reduce charges in the West that most government goodies of this sort are reserved exclusively for the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Such an operation would require entry into downtown Edmonton once again via the high-level bridge over the North Saskatchewan River to the now-idle Jasper Avenue CP station. CP recently cut back its RDC runs to the South Edmonton station, forcing long cab rides across the river (2/3 of Edmonton's population is north of the river)...

ALTHO PASSENGER TRAIN discontinuances may be curtailed or halted in Canada because of increased public concern, a few more runs may go. These include the Edmonton-Grande Centre RDC run of CN; and the twice-weekly overnight Edmonton-Dawson runs of NAR. The Grande Centre run is a very beautiful 4-hr ride thru rural northeast Alberta and includes a 10-mile backing operation down a branch line to St. Paul, Alta. It's a must for train buffs with the time (it requires an overnight stay at Grande Centre, where good hotel accommodations are available). While Ontario residents have been vocal in many areas to have restored the RDC runs ended in October, 1970 by both CN and CP, there is little chance for a restoration of several runs ended in Alberta in 1971. Reason: Albertans don't complain very much, while Ontarians, it is said, can behave like Californians at times. And Ottawa knows this very well. The squeaky wheel gets the grease...

U.S. CUSTOMS & IMMIGRATION Service, which has generally been making life miserable for passenger-carrying services across the U.S.-Canada border, has told BN they'll probably soon be requiring passengers to leave the Amtrak PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL train for inspection at Blaine, Washington. At present, officials come aboard to conduct inspection at your seat...

AMTRAK'S PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL derailed in Surrey, B.C., half-way between New Westminster and the border, at 7:45am April 25. The southbound train hit a truck loaded with timbers, and in running over a timber fallen from the vehicle, a dome car and one end of a coach left the tracks. There were no injuries, but the truck driver reported being bruised. There were 79 passengers aboard, a good load for a Wednesday when there is no COAST STARLIGHT connection. Passengers were bused on to Seattle...

CP RAIL ANNOUNCED the schedule, effective in May, of its new "Carrier Princess" ferry from Vancouver to Swartz Bay (20 miles north of Victoria): leaves Vancouver 1:30am, 9:30am, and 5pm; leaves Swartz Bay 6am, 1pm, and 9:30pm. Crossing time is 3 hours. The 284-passenger ship can carry 50 truck trailers, 30 rail cars, or 150 autos. The last vessel built at Burrard in Vancouver prior to the "Carrier Princess" was the "Princess Louise," launched in 1921...

TORONTO, ONTARIO LEADS the North American continent in many ways in transit system development. The most interesting recent development is the great and unexpected upsurge in business, which has caused a great shortage of subway cars and motor coaches. Repair shop superintendents are sometimes questioned daily about their ability to return needed equipment to service. The shortage has been so acute that the transit system reportedly bought back (at the last minute from the scrapper) coaches that had been delivered to the boneyard for junking...

A VERY LATE and as yet unconfirmed report indicates that the Vancouver Hydro transit system has purchased the 21 trolley coaches and all parts, overhead, fittings, electrical equipment, etc., of the Kitchener, Ontario system. The lone Kitchener trolley line, along King Street, was abandoned in late March. The equipment will be used in Vancouver to extend the very heavy Hastings express trolley service east 3 miles from Kootenay loop. This is the line serving the PNE grounds and boasts a long section of four overhead trolley tracks on one street so that express trolleys can pass the locals working all stops along the curb lanes. The purchase would increase the B.C. Hydro trolley fleet from 299 to 320 coaches...

THE BIG TIMETABLE CHANGE

Amtrak's big new nationwide timetable with changes effective April 29, and with summer schedules to take effect June 10 thru Sept. 9 as well, appeared just before press time. The new publications (left to right in photo) were a nationwide schedule, an East Coast schedule, and a special travel agent's edition of the nationwide timetable. In addition, Amtrak promised that "a series of card and folder schedules" will be available on trains and in stations.

There seemed almost unanimous agreement that the new nationwide table (done in green and black, in a printing of 600,000) is the best yet produced by the rail corporation, and the prompt distribution of the 40-page publication was appreciated by rail travelers who remembered Amtrak's earlier persistent difficulties in getting schedules to distribution points on time.

Both it and the yellow-and-black, 36-page East Coast schedule are printed on heavier paper than previous timetables, while the agent's publication resembles the thin-paper, red-white-and-blue earlier productions. For the first time, the Amtrak system maps are jazzed up with little drawings of points of interest. There is much more complete information in the tables, and Amtrak went so far as to promote its two coast-to-coast thru car services (via the NATIONAL LIMITED-SUPER CHIEF and the SOUTHERN CRESCENT-SUNSET LIMITED) by means of separate tables prominently displayed (earlier timetables scarcely acknowledged their existence). One surprising innovation that undoubtedly sent SP brass into a tizzy was the inclusion of connecting SP San Francisco commute trains in the tables for the COAST DAYLIGHT and STARLIGHT. (Two warnings: you must buy your commute ticket on the train or at a commute station; your travel agent can't include it in your Amtrak ticket. And commute train 153 does not run on Sundays and holidays; you can take train 175 instead that leaves San Jose at 8:30pm--see complete details in the article in our last issue. That article also has an error: line 2 of page 12 should read "leaving San Jose" rather than "leaving S.F.") The coverage of non-Amtrak schedules is more complete, showing even Southern Railway's mixed trains. Each named train now has a detailed list of equipment. There are two pages of information for the inexperienced train traveler, and the number of reference marks is greatly increased.

Getting to the trains themselves, Amtrak's press release emphasized the running of the CHAMPION as a thru Boston-Florida train, the daily operation of the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR and the COAST STARLIGHT starting June 10, and the running of the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA as a separate train on the Spokane-Seattle portion of its route, thus speeding up its running time by 2 hrs 10 mins. The HIAWATHA change is for the period of June 11-Sept. 9, and the tri-weekly scheduling continues. (Not shown in the tables, but learned at press time by RTN, is Amtrak's late decision to run the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA via Wenatchee, Washington, on the former Great Northern route between Spokane and Seattle for a one-year experimental period beginning this summer, while the EMPIRE BUILDER continues to use its present route.)

A change that will be applauded by Western travelers is the later departure time of the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA from Seattle, starting June 13. Leaving 3 hrs later, at 5pm, it permits a direct connection from the COAST STARLIGHT. This is not obvious from the table, but is accomplished by detraining at Tacoma (northbound) and taking the Amtrak bus connection to East Auburn, WA to meet the HIAWATHA.

Amtrak also emphasized better connections on the INTER-AMERICAN. It now leaves Ft. Worth an hour later (7am), since the U.S. changed to Daylight Saving Time April 29, but Mexico remains on standard time. The northbound train leaves Laredo 2hrs later, at 11:30am. The table that shows both that train and the TEXAS CHIEF was set up to show the Ft. Worth-Houston route via Dallas, but the columns remain vacant of figures pending a settlement of the dispute with SP over use of that road's tracks thru Dallas. Beginning June 10 the TEXAS CHIEF departs Chicago 2 hrs later (5pm) and leaves Houston 2½ hrs earlier (9:50am).

Among the Florida trains, the CHAMPION and SILVER METEOR run as separate trains the whole route, rather than being combined as they were last summer. The VACATIONER made its last seasonal run as the new timetable appeared, and a weekend-only train, the New York-Jacksonville CAROLINA SPECIAL, will be put on June 15-Sept. 3, running south Friday nights and north Sunday afternoons. The MONTREALER and WASHINGTONIAN are rescheduled for better Canadian connections. A Metroliner is added to leave Washington for New York Fridays and Sundays at 7pm. Southbound a departure is made the same days from New York at 11:30pm. Also on Sundays two new conventional trains appear: the northbound NEW YORKER leaves Washington at 9pm, and the southbound CHESAPEAKE leaves New York at 6pm. As predicted earlier in RTN, the FLORIDIAN goes to a 2-night-1-day schedule between Chicago and Florida. It continues as a thru train between Chicago and St. Petersburg, with thru car service to and from Miami via the SILVER STAR.

The Washington-Parkersburg POTOMAC SPECIAL, due for discontinuance after May 5, is missing in the April 29 shcedules. Continuation of the train would require the regional governments involved to subsidize 2/3 of the train's losses.

Other minor changes in schedules include a later Seattle departure of the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL to Vancouver (now 6:15pm). There are minor time changes on the BN portion of trains 5 and 55 (Chicago to Denver), on the ILLINOIS ZEPHYR, and, as of June 10, on the EMPIRE BUILDER. Hiawatha Service train 328 will operate one hour later beginning June 10. The BROADWAY LIMITED has minor schedule shifts, and Johnstown, PA is now a flag stop. The NATIONAL LIMITED also has slight schedule changes, and Latrobe and Wilkinsburg, PA are no longer shown as stops. For the first time in a nationwide schedule, the train numbers 98 and 99 are shown for the connection to Newport News, VA of the GEORGE WASHINGTON/JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

In this summary we have not attempted to cover all Northeast Corridor changes, and the sharp-eyed reader will find other small items we have not mentioned. One will note, for example, that the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR's dome is said to contain a "Stairway to the Stars" with "every seat under glass." The reader is urged to obtain his or her own schedule (write: Amtrak, 955 L'Enfant Plaza North, S.W., Washington DC 20024), since this newsletter is written with the assumption that the reader has access to the latest Amtrak schedules.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AGAIN DEFEATS MASS TRANSIT AID BILL

For the third time, the House defeated on April 19 by a close vote of 215 to 190 an amendment which would have allowed a small portion of the Highway Trust Fund to be used for the building of urban mass transit systems. The Senate earlier passed a bill to permit $800 million a year of Trust Fund money to be used to buy transit equipment. The bill now goes to a joint House-Senate conference committee, where the pro-transit forces are believed to be the underdogs. Altho the House bill permits $3 billion from the general revenue fund to be used for transit, it is unlikely that such an amount would be actually appropriated by a budget-cutting administration. The administration strongly backed the defeated bill. For editorial reactions, see QUOTES, page 15.

mixed train of thoughts

A NEW STOP--Rowlesburg, WV--was added to the POTOMAC SPECIAL about two months before its coming May 5 demise. Meanwhile, Rep. Harley Staggers of W. Virginia is bitter about the DOT-recommended discontinuance. He charged Amtrak with "bureaucratic mismanagement, shortsighted policies and general disinterest or inability to formulate an effective program to restore this nation's passenger rail service..." and called for the corporation to extend the train to Cincinnati rather than drop it..... A DIFFERENT POTOMAC SPECIAL--via rail and river--will run as an excursion May 19 & 20. Info from NRHS, Box 8583, Richmond VA 23226..... AFTER PRINTING THE new timetables (see separate article), Amtrak was pressured into retaining the NATIONAL LTD stops at Latrobe and Wilkinsburg, PA..... ABSOLUTELY NO FOUNDATION exists to the statements attributed to an Amtrak spokesman in a Santa Barbara, CA newspaper April 18 that a Turbo Train would be running L.A.-San Francisco within 18 months, that the STARLIGHT will be renamed the ZEPHYR, or that Amtrak has an auto-train operation in the East... THE MILWAUKEE ROAD announced in February that it will eliminate its 656-mile electrified line in Montana, Idaho and Washington, deciding to use diesels instead..... LOS ANGELES UNION Passenger Terminal is again without food service. Oh well, there's still Olvera Street across the street, which we can recommend highly..... TORRENTIAL RAINS IN Wisconsin this month caused the Reeseville Swamp to overflow and flood the Milwaukee Road main line west of Watertown. Amtrak trains 7, 8, 9, & 10 were rerouted over BN between Chicago and La Crosse, Wisconsin, via Savanna and the scenic Mississippi Palisades region. Chicago-Milwaukee service was unaffected..... BN HAS RECEIVED the first of its 21 rebuilt E9 engines for the Chicago-Aurora suburban service. These are owned by the West Suburban Mass Transit District and are leased back to BN. They underwent extensive modification, and will be painted in the regular green & white colors. A name of a regular commuter, chosen in a contest, will be emblazoned on each. The first one, the 9910 (ex-9980) has been named the "Putz".. SOUTHERN PACIFIC HAS been fiddling for some time with a new paint scheme for greater visibility of its locomotives--something reportedly involving red and white with gray roof, but we know of no one who has seen the design yet..... SOUTH AFRICAN RAILWAYS has ordered 100 diesels from General Motors, 25 of them to be built in the U.S. A South African subsidiary of GM will build the rest, the first to be built there..... SPOKANE'S EXPO '74, now in the making, suffered a blow when vandals severely damaged the 71-year old clock salvaged from the old Spokane Great Northern depot. Replacement parts are very difficult or impossible to obtain. The clock tower dominates the exposition site..... A CHICAGO-MILWAUKEE roundtrip special ran April 13, run by Amtrak for a tour group, featuring an all-Amtrak consist of five domes: engine 405, dome lounge 9225, dome coach 9545 "Silver Vision," dome coffee shop 9813 "Silver Cup," dome coach 9479, and dome parlor observation 9330 "Silver Chateau". Southbound the train ran with consist reversed, the observation right behind the diesel..... THE FOUR MILWAUKEE Road domes bought by Amtrak became nos. 9380-9383 (formerly Milw 55, 57-59). They were built in 1952..... FOUR EX-U.P. sleeping cars have been taken to Mt. McKinley National Park in Alaska to serve as partial replacement for the lodge which recently burned down. They were taken north over the ocean by barge. Two are believed to be ex-UP National Emblem and National Progress, of 6-6-4 variety..... EX-GN "RANCH" car 1240 "Crossley Lake" has been sold as scrap to a Seattle breaker after sitting on a siding near Lake Union in the central area of Seattle for several months. The surviving 5 cars are busy. Four are working for Amtrak, and BN is keeping one for its own use..... SEN. MIKE MANSFIELD of Montana has told the press he'll seek daily year-round operation for the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA. He said he'd try "persuasion first, legislation if necessary," giving every indication he'll have the train made a line item in the upcoming Amtrak appropriations bill, if necessary.....

Two Years of Amtrak

by Jim Russell, Ken Maylath, Wes Roberts, and with the assistance of others

As these lines are written, in the late hours of May 1, two Amtrak-day ceremonies have drawn to completion--one in Washington, one in Chicago--to mark the second anniversary of the beginning of operations by the National Railroad Passenger Corporation.

When the corporation took over two years ago, David W. Kendall, head of the incorporators of Amtrak, made this statement: "We feel that this network of trains... provides a solid base upon which to build and expand the scope and quality of intercity passenger service. This new system can and will succeed because it unifies for the first time the operation and promotion of the nation's rail passenger service. Now, a single management can devote its energy exclusively to serving the passenger... We know these changes which are vital to upgrading rail service cannot be accomplished overnight. We are optimistic, however, that continuing improvements will attract hundreds of thousands of people who have not recently--or ever--relied on railroad transportation." In our May 3, 1971 issue we printed these words, and likewise the pithy comment of Ralph Nader: "Amtrak is a fraud designed for the abolition of the passenger train service in America."

With the 1971 takeover we editorialized that Amtrak was "woefully underfinanced to do the job it's required by law to do." We called the Amtrak system "still just a skeleton." We said that "There are many flaws in it, but much hopefulness that it can actually be built into the proper system that the Amtrak incorporators talk about."

During the first year of Amtrak, progress was exceedingly slow. In our May 1, 1972 issue our remarks showed a good deal of bitterness. NARP and Congress were angry too. Said we, "...all the time that Amtrak is inching toward incremental improvement of the existing system, time is running out within which Amtrak is supposed to show public monetary support of its trains. Half that time has now passed, and according to media reports, Amtrak has so far failed to reverse the trend of decreasing rail patronage, except in the Northeast Corridor."

The fury of Congress seemed to galvanize Amtrak into action in the months following May 1, 1972. Although the summer was a near disaster, with trains plagued with equipment problems and passengers turned away or driven off by a myriad of snafus, things began to show improvement gradually. Amtrak was at last able to demonstrate a turning around of the historic decline in passenger train patronage. Train travel was really starting to catch on, and Amtrak was getting enough good equipment spread around that there were a few things to brag about and to show off to potential customers. Besides this, the whole climate of opinion about American transportation was beginning to change most noticeably. The disaffection with the automobile, the environmental disruption of too many airports, too many freeways, the tragic death rate of highway travel--all these matters were clearly coming to the fore. The passenger train seemed to have everything going for it--except enough money to buy good equipment and improve neglected roadbeds.

In a democracy the nature of the political process that keeps things on an even keel is compromise. Nobody gets too much of anything, or too little, so few people are totally dissatisfied. A corollary of this is that those in need must speak out loudly and firmly. They must ask for the moon, then settle for a satellite. Theoretically, nothing happens unless there is a public demand for it. Whatever segment of the public is clamoring for something must manage to make itself heard loud and clear. Then the bookkeepers step into the picture and arrange to satisfy that public segment while balancing out the dissatisfaction that others would have if the demand were fully granted.

This is how things work in theory. In actuality, things don't stay nicely on an even keel. Sometimes one pressure group gets too much of an upper hand, and the sys-

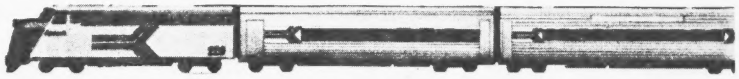
tem goes out of balance. Then it's extremely difficult to rebalance things because one pressure group can frustrate criticism with the tremendous power it holds. Another problem is that not enough of the public may be aware of their own difficulties to complain; then "opinion leaders" must stir up and educate sufficient members of the public to create a bloc of power that can demand a rebalance of the system.

Our American transportation system has suffered from some of these problems. One of the major ones was when Congress mandated the building of the interstate highway system in 1956, setting up the highway trust fund that perpetuated highway construction and set in motion a great unbalancing element in our overall transportation system. Congress did not deliberately set about to create the chaos we now experience. It unwittingly blundered into a scheme that would virtually kill the passenger train, create untold urban crises, seriously disrupt vital features of the environment, and unbalance our transportation for years to come.

The restoration of balance requires a great push in the opposite direction equal in force to that which set billions of dollars to work in a direction that would do great harm to our nation's travel facilities. That is why now is the time for a big push to create a truly effective, modern rail transportation system that is befitting the greatness of our nation.

This is not the time to take a bookkeeper's approach to our travel problems and the pressing problems of environmental destruction and fuel depletion. Our national rail passenger system may creep along with the few million that the administration is preparing to allow it in the next year ($93 million, of which $80 million is returned to the treasury in the form of taxes from railroads made more efficient by the placement of passenger operations under one management); or it may move ahead like all other highly developed nations with new, modern equipment, new, better rails, and expanded routes for the great expansion in travel predicted by all seers.

Clearly, the second alternative is preferable. But even there, we can do something more than merely mimic other nations. We have the opportunity to grasp the initiative and show world leadership in transportation. Even tho other countries have fine railroad systems, many of them are beginning to experience, or are destined to experience the same kinds of vexing pollution and congestion problems with road systems that we're familiar with. We've gone that route already, and we have the chance to show the world new creative solutions that other countries can themselves apply. In the development of non-polluting engines, of new sources of energy that don't harm the environment, of improved travel technology that makes lives easier rather than dreary and depressing--in these matters we have the opportunity now to take the initiative and show the world how it's done. But perhaps even more than in technology, we have the opportunity for new, creative, flexible arrangements in the political and social realms for dealing with transport problems. Our democracy allows for close interaction between those governed and those governing. There is no need to adopt solutions made by fiat by bureaucrats on high. With the close exchange that can exist between government and the "private sector," we are able to be more flexible and more efficient--theoretically--in our planning. We should exploit this advantage to the fullest, to permit experimentation with new arrangements for travel and transit that are to the good of all citizens. The biggest hangups



in transportation are not the lack of suitable technology, but rather the difficulty in getting opposing jurisdictions to come together and mesh systems to insure safe, comfortable, efficient travel facilities for all our people. The problems are primarily political, legal and social ones.

We're not calling for a nationalized railroad system, for that would only put the bureaucrats in charge, leading to inflexibility and inefficiency. Rather, we believe that an organization like Amtrak, combining the alleged efficiency of private enterprise with the nationwide outlook of government is the best arrangement for our conditions. It's possible for us to have the best of two worlds from such an arrangement, unlike other countries that find nationalized systems rigid and unresponsive.

The biggest problem with Amtrak is that the present administration does not seem to really believe in the creative hybrid it helped spawn. The administration is being far too short-sighted in cutting appropriations to the barest minimum, while haggling over services that would cost a pittance as citizens continue to die at the rate of 150 a day on highways that have no other ground-travel alternative. This administration will eventually go, and another will eventually appear that will be inclined to spend more money on trains. But when it does, will it nationalize the rails as well? It may then be the only route left toward improving them sufficiently. A big appropriation now--a big shot in the arm to get Amtrak really moving, might be the best antidote to eventual nationalization. If Amtrak makes it as it is, there will be less reason to change things and acquire a less efficient, less responsive bureaucratic monster at the controls of our passenger trains.

We feel strongly then that Amtrak's funding should be heavily increased <u>now</u>. It's in the best interests of all the nation. Let's get new equipment ordered at once, let's get our track upgraded now, let's start serious planning for a vast expansion in passenger train service to really get our transportation system balanced again.

the future of Amtrak

Herewith we present our recommendations for expansion of the present Amtrak rail system. These recommendations are based upon our ideal of unlimited availability of funds. If less than this ideal must be accepted, many or most of our proposals could still be adopted, we believe. In any event, they provide what we hope is the starting point for discussions about needed future service. Some of these proposals are undoubtedly already being considered or even acted upon by Amtrak. However, we list here those we believe worthwhile that are not now in existence, not necessarily in order of importance.

(1) To begin in the West, an overnight Los Angeles-San Francisco/Oakland train--a restoration of the LARK, a train that would surely be well-patronized. Perhaps its northerly terminus could be Sacramento, and it would be desirable to carry thru cars to San Diego (these could be stocked, given lack of San Diego facilities, after returning to Los Angeles as a local train--in effect, another SAN DIEGAN).

(2) An auto-carrying train on the West Coast, and another to Chicago.

(3) Restoration of service in California's San Joaquin Valley.

(4) A Los Angeles-Denver train. Reports are that there's a great potential in Southern California for travel on this non-existent route.

(5) More trains on the SAN DIEGAN route, including what Robert J. Swan calls a VEGAN SAN DIEGAN, between Las Vegas, L.A., and San Diego.

(6) Regular daily service on all routes that are now tri-weekly.

(7) Operation of one of the Chicago-Seattle trains directly into Portland. The equipment could be then used as a local Portland-Seattle corridor train for economy.

(8) Service thru Dallas, with better connections with the train to Mexico.

(9) A St. Louis-Laredo train running via Little Rock.

(10) Service to Cleveland. There are several ways in which Cleveland could be served. One would involve a second Chicago-Washington train running Washington-Pittsburgh on B&O and then to Cleveland and Chicago on PC. A Cleveland-Cincinnati train would also be desirable; this could be combined with a Chicago connection between Cleveland and Crestline, a second New York-Chicago train as part of this. Also, the LAKE SHORE could be restored.

(11) A Boston-Albany connection which could be combined with Boston-New York inland trains between Boston and Springfield.

(12) A Boston-Montreal service via Springfield, using the MONTREALER north of Springfield.

(13) Run-throughs of some corridor trains to Richmond, VA, as NARP has suggested. This could be expanded to a couple direct runs to Newport News (switching from the RF&P to C&O north of Richmond where the two lines cross.

(14) A second Chicago-New York train, alluded to above. The present situation is like a funnel which can't handle all the liquid being poured into it, and overflows. Half a dozen long distance trains come into Chicago from the west, in addition to shorter runs, and for most passengers there is but one train they take to the east. That's why the BROADWAY was sold out so frequently last summer.

Readers will be able to suggest other important, needed trains that we've omitted. In addition to the above, of course, we suggest the retention of all existing trains, at least until service upgrading has progressed sufficiently to allow a true estimate of patronage level. We don't want to believe that Amtrak is a fraud. We want to believe that Amtrak and the administration are truly concerned with balancing our transportation system and providing the humanized kind of travel environment we all deserve.

A LAST (?) LOOK AT THE POTOMAC SPECIAL by Peter Roehm

From Youngstown, Ohio I boarded a Hound to Akron, connecting there with another of the same litter for the B&O town of Parkersburg. The Hound was an hour late in arriving since it refused to start after a meal break in Cambridge, Ohio. But there remained 4½ hours before the B&O departed. Two Amtrak cars, one an ex-B&O dome, were spotted at the Parkersburg depot, having come in the night before with a third B&O-painted coach, sitting across the street on a siding and scheduled for the eastbound Sunday train. As it turns out, the suggestion of increased patronage put it on today's (Saturday April 21) train.

Scuttlebutt around the depot and later on the train gives forth two rumors about this train. One has it that Staggers, Randolph, and others are trying to get this run extended to Cincinnati and thus sidetrack the GEORGE WASHINGTON; Chessie objects, it goes, as their Greenbrier resort would be without rail service. The other rumor is quite logical in that it would have the run come to Cumberland and then turn north to Pittsburgh. This would allow Pittsburgh-Washington service and cancel the Harrisburg-Washington shuttle. If this should come to pass there would then be no reason why it could not continue to Cleveland. Doing so would activate the Cleveland-Pittsburgh corridor, provide direct Washington service between there and Pittsburgh and Cleveland, and allow Cleveland passengers east-west connections at Pittsburgh. Making sense as this does, it most likely will not happen. But there are petitions circulating in the mountain country for the Cincinnati idea, at least, and should this fail, those activist types in the Potomac Valley may redirect their energies toward Pittsburgh and Cleveland. We will hope so.

In any event, GP-7 6698 backed up to the Amtrak cars and then later attached the B&O car 5500 (Amtrak cars: coach 5243, dome 9420). A fairly good crowd was aboard, the dome was filled, and the two coaches had a smattering of people. With the demise posted for May 4 westbound and May 5 eastbound, there appeared to be a popular

Washington – Parkersburg

HARPERS FERRY - CUMBERLAND - CLARKSBURG

day trip in vogue whereby one rides from Parkersburg or Clarksburg to Oakland, 151 miles, detraining and waiting about 45 mins for the westbound train back home. It looked as tho the idea is a good one as a couple of dozen were making such a trip this particular day.

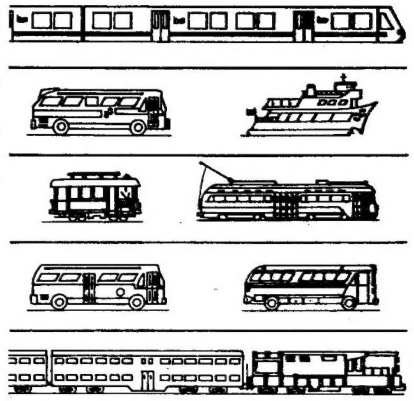
The most scenic portions are the three grades between Grafton and Keyser where, in some areas, the train rides the ridge high above the Cheat or Savage rivers. The Cumberland station-hotel has now become a pile of rubble.

By the time the train reached Harpers Ferry the third coach was needed and filled by sixty kids who had been camping in the area. Two cyclists also boarded and put their bikes in the coach men's room.

Washington arrival was a few minutes late due to the Harpers Ferry loading delay, but the ride was enjoyable and the potential for a restructured routing is excellent.

Urban-Suburban Transit

SP COMMUTE LINE GETS UNWANTED ADVERTISING



The drawings at right appeared in a two-page ad in a regional edition of Time magazine (Apr. 30) sponsored by Golden Gate Transit--the G. G. Bridge, Highway & Transportation District--"in support of the objectives of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission" of the S.F. Bay Area. It's a prescription for keeping the "Los Angeles flu out of the Bay Area." Says the ad: "You can't blame Los Angeles for getting sick. They rely almost entirely on their automobiles. Until they get a fully developed public transportation system they have to live with swollen freeways, feverish traffic, and head-splitting, heart-breaking environmental pollution." The ad goes on to urge Bay Area people to ride public transit--the "finest system...in the country." Phone numbers and information about all public lines in the area are given, including SP. Note the neat drawing of an SP Trainmaster engine and bilevel car (see article on SP commute line in our last issue). A BART train appears at the top, and just below it Golden Gate Transit bus and ferry.

RAPID TRANSIT BUS DESTROYED BY FIRE

A new Rapid Transit District express bus caught fire on the San Bernardino Freeway between El Monte and Los Angeles April 23, when a tire blew out. All passengers escaped shortly before the $44,000 bus was gutted with flames--a total loss. Auto traffic was tied up for two hours at the commute rush. The bus was running on a new express busway that has been criticized by transit planners who see trains as a better solution to L.A.'s transit problems.

PROBLEMS BESET INTRODUCTION OF NEW PENN CENTRAL COMMUTER CARS

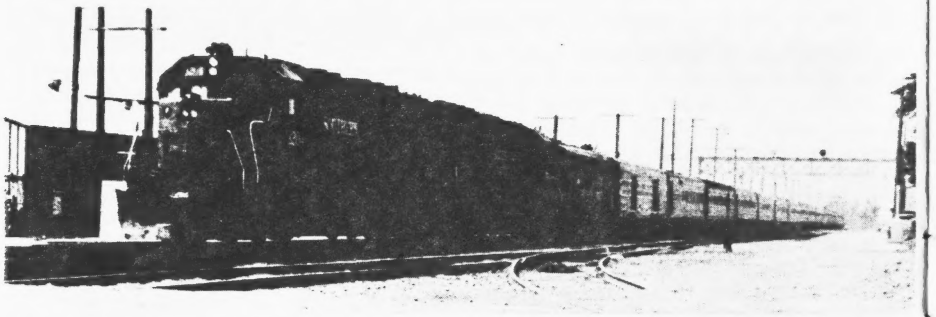
The Penn Central, New Haven Division, celebrated the introduction of new modern commuter cars April 16 with a special run from Stamford, CT to Grand Central Terminal, N.Y.C. But the train, carrying Governor Rockefeller, arrived 12 minutes late in typical PC fashion, while hundreds of commuters were trapped for up to two hours in stalled trains in the tunnel under Park Avenue. Malfunction of a third rail was blamed for the delays, and Rockefeller was unaware of the problem with the other trains as his new VIP train arrived for a continental breakfast celebration. "We haven't had a day like this in months," apologized a PC spokesman, obviously embarrassed.

GREYHOUND'S ANTI-AMTRAK CAMPAIGN INTENSIFIES

Besides the leafleting being done by Greyhound urging riders to oppose funds for Amtrak (see QUOTES, page 15), reader Ronald Cady reports seeing a TV commercial for Greyhound with Fred MacMurray standing on a railroad track telling the audience not to use Amtrak's Detroit to Chicago trains because they are too slow. In other developments, a rumor has been circulating that Amtrak may put one of its soon-to-be acquired Turbos on that line. Amtrak reportedly would neither confirm nor deny the rumor, thus intensifying it.

AN EQUIPMENT SHORTAGE forced the return of Chicago trolley buses on four lines after they had been removed over environmentalists' protests.

FIRST LOOK AT THE "DESCHUTES DAYLIGHT" - THE SP RAIL YARD EXPLOSIONS AND THE SURPRISE RE-ROUTINGS



The train pictured above is officially called the COAST STARLIGHT/DAYLIGHT. However on the occasion (2:15pm April 27) that photographer Ted Nelson snapped it, it might have been called the "Deschutes Daylight," having made a one-time only detour thru that scenic Oregon river canyon, and now heading south thru Berkeley for a 6-hr late Oakland arrival. It was the first passenger train thru BN's east-of-the-Cascades route via Bend, Oregon since a pre-Amtrak excursion train. When the southbound STARLIGHT of April 26 reached Portland, it was re-routed due to a massive freight derailment at Renard, Oregon. Circling around thru the city, it returned to Vancouver, Washington, where it followed the Columbia River to Wishram, crossing over to commence the long detour on the BN route on tracks labelled on older maps as Oregon Traction to Bend, and Great Northern to Chemult, Oregon, where it rejoined the SP line. All 13 cars of the (regular) consist are visible in the original print reproduced here--baggage, baggage-dorm, 3 coaches, snack car, 3 coaches, lounge, diner, 2 sleepers. RTN would like to know if any other photos of that day's train exist.

A catastrophe greater than the Oregon freight derailment occurred at Roseville, California the morning of April 28. A string of SP freight cars loaded with 250-pound bombs shipped from Nevada and destined for Port Chicago, CA for movement to Southeast Asia began exploding. The load of over 7000 bombs continued detonating throughout the day, causing millions of dollars in damage and about 50 reported injuries, but miraculously no deaths. The effects of the explosions and flying shrapnel were felt a considerable distance away, and highway 80 was closed most of the day to keep traffic away from the danger area. About 50,000 people were evacuated, and the tiny town of Antelope was completely leveled by the blasts.

Not surprisingly, the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR leaving for Chicago that morning required re-routing. It left Oakland at the normal 9:30, and at Sacramento stopped for re-routing arrangements. It turned north to Haggin on Sacramento Northern interchange track, picked up a pilot Western Pacific engineer and conductor, and headed for the Feather River Canyon on almost exactly the old CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR schedule. It raced thru Marysville, made a brief stop at Oroville yard, then went straight thru with delays only for slow orders due to laying of welded rail in the canyon, reaching Portola, CA at dinnertime. There it was serviced--3 cars at a time due to limited facilities, and continued on into Nevada to rejoin SP track. It was not the first re-routing on WP, but the first to use the Feather River Canyon segment.

The next train due thru was SFZ #5 that had left Chicago the 27th. At Carlin, NV the train arrived just as the station clock hands were being set from 2 to 3am to change over to Daylight Saving Time, automatically placing the train an hour late. But somehow the re-routing orders did not reach the train in time, and it proceeded as far as Winnemucca on SP before it stopped and backed up to Weso, where it went on to WP to head westbound thru the Canyon, with final Oakland arrival at 9:10pm, 7 1/4 hours late

ALL ABOARD

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND AT LAKE TAHOE

PLAN TO JOIN US MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND WHEN WE OPERATE PRIVATE COMPORTABLE MODERN AIR CONDITIONED PRIVATE CARS ATTACHED TO THE SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR TO RENO-SPARKS-LAKE TAHOE MAY 26 THRU MAY 29. WHEN WE ARRIVE IN SPARKS A CHARTERED MOTOR COACH WILL MEET US TRAINSIDE FOR THE SHORT RIDE TO THE FRIENDSHIP INN NESTLED IN THE PINES AT SOUTH LAKE TAHOE. WE'LL HAVE TWO NIGHTS AT SOUTH SHORE, SO THERE IS PLENTY OF TIME FOR GAMBLING, SWIMMING AT THE INDOOR OR OUTDOOR POOLS, OR AT THE PRIVATE BEACH, FREE SAUNA, FREE WHIRLPOOL SPA, HORSEBACK RIDING AND MORE. RETURN TO RENO-SPARKS AREA MAY 28. CARS PARKED AT SPARKS FOR OVERNIGHT OCCUPANCY. RETURN TO BAY AREA MAY 29.

PRICES

UPPER BERTH $85.00	HOTEL AND SLEEPING CAR SPACE IS LIMITED.
LOWER BERTH $90.00	AVOID DISSAPOINTMENT AND MAKE YOUR RESER-
ROMETTE $95.00	VATIONS EARLY. A $25.00 DEPOSIT WILL HOLD
BEDROOM FOR ONE $110.00	SPACE UNTIL MAY 18 AT WHICH TIME BALANCE
BEDROOM FOR TWO EACH $85.00	IS DUE.

FARES PER PERSON INCLUDES TRANSPORTATION, PRIVATE CAR ACCOMODATIONS, HOTEL ROOMS BASED ON TWO (2) PER ROOM, CHARTERED MOTOR COACH AND HOSPITALITY ROOMS AT THE NUGGET IN SPARKS.

NEED MORE INFO? CONTACT CLIFF MCDANIEL FOR RESERVATION REQUEST 356 S. JAYNE AVE. #103 OAKLAND, CA. 94610 or CALL 271-8038 days, 839-9807 nights

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"The refusal by the House of Representatives to allow a mere 10 per cent of the $7 billion available annually in Highway Trust funds to be spent on urban mass transit is a heavy blow to urban survival. The combined power of the highway lobby of truckers and construction interests and of the anti-urban rural forces succeeded in denying some relief to cities poisoned by exhaust fumes and immobilized by collapsing transportation systems... House Republican leader Gerald R. Ford of Michigan, deaf to the Administration's warnings about air pollution and urban paralysis, termed any modest diversion of highway funds 'a bottomless pit.' This is sheer nonsense. The House action stands as a glaring example of the triumph of special over national interests."

--New York Times editorial, April 20

"It's time to lower the boom on the highway lobby and the politicians and public officials who guard its interests as if nothing were more sacred than concrete, I-beams and automobiles... We urge every person who wants better transportation and cleaner cities to demand favorable action from the Congress. With luck, and if the people make enough noise, Highway Trust Fund money may yet be used for something more constructive than highways."

--Seattle Post-Intelligencer editorial, April 27

"There are, of course, passenger trains that serve a need in some parts of the country, and we support a balanced passenger transport system--bus, plane and train. But train passengers should pay their full way, too. Instead, Congress is being asked to give Amtrak $93 million more in subsidies this year to cover its losses. If you agree that the cost of a train ticket should at least cover the cost of running the train, write your Senators (Washington, D.C. 20510) and Congressmen (Washington, D.C. 20515) now! Thank you! Greyhound Lines Inc. Greyhound--A change for the better."

--Leaflet currently distributed to Greyhound passengers

UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE MONTH***

"Make your reservations early. Amtrak trains are often full over the summer."

--From a current Amtrak newspaper ad

Empire Service Revisited

by Ken Maylath

My old stamping grounds. I grew up along the old New York Central main line in New York State. I rolled up thousands of miles on the Central's New York area commuter service as well as long distance trains which took me back and forth to college as well as on other trips. And so it was I was anxious to make my first trip through New York State since the advent of Amtrak--to see how things are going.

In the late 60's, before the NYC-PRR merger, the Central began its EMPIRE SERVICE as a way of cutting costs and attracting new business. Head end business went by the boards on most trains, with schedules accelerated and train names dropped. I had sampled this service on several occasions--but not since May 1, 1971, when Amtrak took over and continued the original setup basically unchanged.

For reasons of time and economy, and to avoid backtracking, my off-season journey began via Greyhound bus--an overnight journey from Baltimore to Rochester via Scranton with a middle-of-the-night change in Binghamton. The recent-model bus arrived in Rochester a few minutes early, but two blocks from the Rochester railroad station. The 75 minutes available before train time provided an opportunity for breakfast.

Amtrak train 74 was due in Rochester from its starting point in Buffalo that Sunday morning at 9:37. It failed to meet that schedule, giving the twenty or so passengers waiting to board an extra 15 minutes to hear the easy listening FM radio music piped in on the PA system. (The music was a New York Central, not Amtrak innovation.)

We were 20 minutes behind schedule leaving Rochester--apparently due to the bad track and slow orders now common in Western New York State. The train could just as easily have been operating five years ago. A black PC diesel unit and four coaches, none of them lettered Amtrak, or refurbished by the NRPC. They were all former NYC long-distance coaches, slightly refurbished by the Central specifically for the EMPIRE SERVICE trains. Many of their relatives are now operating on the Northeast Corridor runs--in fact, some were leased by the Pennsylvania even before the merger. They date from the late 40's.

Just a handful on the train out of Buffalo, perhaps 30 in all after the Rochester departure. One thing that quickly became apparent was the poorer quality of the track compared with my previous runs in earlier years. Just out of Rochester we eased past the remains of a recent freight derailment, then picked up to our maximum speed of 60 between Rochester and Syracuse. Generally, it was 60 on welded rail sections, 50 otherwise, and even slower across poorly maintained interlockings that used to be taken at 80.

So it was that the 85 minutes shown in the timetable for the run to Syracuse stretched to 110 minutes--putting us 45 minutes behind schedule at that point. But there was some difficulty with the diesel unit as well which was checked during the Syracuse stop, stretching our stay there to a full 20 minutes. Thus, a departure one hour five minutes late.

At this point, the whole thing seemed to have the makings of a first class disaster, and I was wondering whether we'd get to New York at all that night. Fortunately, however, the worst was over. The track was better after Syracuse and we moved along at 70 much of the time. Our Rome and Utica stops saw us just about holding our own. From Utica to Amsterdam we exactly equaled the scheduled time of 62 minutes. By then we were generally maintaining the speeds of several years ago--which were always a little lower on the eastern section of the Mohawk Division. It's a pleasant ride too--with the track following the curvings of the Mohawk River and New York State Barge Canal. As we moved east, the passenger count moved higher. Too, as the day progressed the schedule was more appealing to those who were winding up weekend visits in upstate New York.

From Amsterdam to Albany we made up a few minutes--moving along at a good pace with no delays. At the New York State capital a fifth car was added for the run down the Hudson, and was done rather quickly at that. Our Albany stop totaled 7 minutes. Our departure was 58 minutes behind schedule, meaning that nearly 10 minutes had been gained since Syracuse. We did fairly well coming down the river--picking up good loads of passengers at Hudson and Rhinecliff. By then, all five cars were pretty well filled. We arrived at Harmon for our change to electric power exactly one hour behind. For some reason the power change took a full 10 minutes, although it's often done a bit faster than that. As we waited for departure, train 75 departed westbound, on time. (Train 71 was observed near Little Falls on the Mohawk River, and #73 just north of Hudson, both on or virtually on schedule.)

The electrified run into New York is a bit slower than it used to be since the few remaining electric engines are restricted to 50 MPH, rather than the former 60. This is primarily due to the condition of the engines themselves. They are the ones that once operated at Cleveland, before electrification there was discontinued. In any event, we pulled into Grand Central Station at 5:55--just one hour late.

At this point I made the familiar dash via subway to Penn Station and was able to get on the 6:15 METROLINER, since it was a few minutes late arriving from New Haven. This Sunday-only run brought me back to Baltimore with just one stop, neither gaining nor losing time after a 9 minute late departure from New York.

My primary impression after a ride across New York State is that little has been changed by Amtrak--especially when comparisons are made with other routes. From my own observations and other information, it's obvious that little refurbished or even different equipment is in operation. Some former SCL coaches were used on EMPIRE SERVICE trains for a time but were withdrawn because their lower seating capacity required use of more cars. So--the former NYC cars, with snack bar service only, are the order of the day as they have been since the EMPIRE SERVICE began. At the same time, schedules have been slowed due to track conditions and the number of trains reduced.

Amtrak did have some plans for improving things last year--indeed I have a copy of a New York State timetable actually distributed for a time showing a dome car from Harmon to Buffalo on one run and a grill car for food service on another. The dome was called off because of clearance problems at the Rochester station. Changes at Rochester seem to have eased the clearance problem now. There was some kind of delay in refurbishing the grill car, I understand, but it's been some time since the target date of its operation.

The point is this. There are few routes in the country (including the soon-to-end Parkersburg run) that bear as little of the Amtrak stamp as the one from New York to Buffalo. I would say that it's high time that (1) More refurbished coaches get rolling in New York State, (2) The dome cars go into service, (3) More than snack bar service be provided on the long runs to Buffalo (especially the one which connects with Toronto). I think it would also be a plus to give the Buffalo runs train names, in line with the policy followed over the rest of the Amtrak system. Unfortunately, there is probably little Amtrak can do at this point about the shortcomings in the track. Upgrading the appearance and service on the trains would be a plus. This, especially, since I understand that print and broadcast advertising are used to promote the EMPIRE SERVICE.

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AMTRAK RIDERSHIP IS UP IN MARCH

Two issues ago we published Amtrak's ridership figures for major trains for February. On April 20 the rail corporation released similar figures for March, and we give these below, repeating the February data for comparison. Where more than one figure appears for a train, it means the train operates over more than one railroad, and separate counts are taken on each road. Apparently the figures include every ticket collected along the entire route, rather than counts made at specific points. (* The figure 5 for train 16 for February is obviously wrong, but we have not been able to obtain the correct figure from Amtrak.) Figures are average passengers per run. Trains 5 & 6 on BN include the DENVER ZEPHYR.

TRAIN & NUMBER	AVG. PSGRS/DAY FEB	MAR	
SUNSET #1	178	215	
SUNSET #2	197	228	
SUPER CHIEF #3	87	234	
SUPER CHIEF #4	149	290	
SF ZEPHYR #5	188	202	BN
	128	128	UP
	181	146	SP
SF ZEPHYR #6	168	202	BN
	115	136	UP
	217	177	SP
EMPIRE BLDR #7	128	139	Milw
	267	270	BN
EMPIRE BLDR #8	130	160	Milw
	281	310	BN
N.C. HIAWATHA #9	142	156	Milw
	194	185	BN
N.C. HIAWATHA #10	136	148	Milw
	176	176	BN
STARLIGHT #11-12	220	208	BN
	386	428	SP
STARLIGHT #13-14	145	170	BN
	352	466	SP
DAYLIGHT #12	133	131	
DAYLIGHT #13	146	127	
TEXAS CHIEF #15	98	260	
TEXAS CHIEF #16*	5	225	
INTER-AMER. #21	62	26	ATSF
	69	114	MP
INTER-AMER. #22	49	13	ATSF
	50	43	MP
NATL LTD #30-530	53	61	MP
	122	129	PC
#530	9	9	PC
NATL LTD #31-531	52	60	MP
	211	223	PC
#531	9	13	PC
BDWY LTD #40-540	198	223	PC
#540	27	33	
BDWY LTD #41-541	274	220	
#541	26	30	
GEO WASH #50	58	73	C&O
	32	35	PC
J.W. RILEY #51	67	66	C&O
	42	56	PC

TRAIN & NUMBER	AVG. PSGRS/DAY FEB	MAR	
FLORIDIAN #52	66	61	PC
	79	79	L&N
#93	43	34	SCL
FLORIDIAN #53	55	62	PC
	72	89	L&N
#94	56	67	SCL
PANAMA LTD #58	164	131	
PANAMA LTD #59	270	114	
MONTREALER #60	593	559	
WASHINGTONIAN #61	462	433	
SILVER STAR #81-91	165	134	PC
	178	168	RF&P
	240	237	SCL
#91	108	93	SCL
SILVER STAR #82-92	144	105	PC
	129	140	RF&P
	163	172	SCL
#92	78	43	SCL
SILVER METEOR #83	208	144	PC
	182	163	RF&P
	184	164	SCL
SILVER METEOR #84	183	188	PC
	156	187	RF&P
	171	208	SCL
CHAMPION #85	163	150	PC
	167	156	RF&P
	209	208	SCL
CHAMPION #86	170	172	PC
	155	177	RF&P
	112	244	SCL
VACATIONER #95	304	359	PC
	115	90	RF&P
	172	154	SCL
VACATIONER #96	150	167	PC
	142	157	RF&P
	197	227	SCL
NIGHT OWL #168	384	397	
NIGHT OWL #169	500	527	
PAC INT'L #194	42	50	
PAC INT'L #193	63	70	
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